

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02

SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 /066 W

-----036670 131510Z /42

R 131310Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY SANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1805

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANA 2690

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, ET, SU

SUBJECT: ACTIVITIES OF FORMER ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR

BEGIN SUMMARY: FORMER ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR, COMMODORE TASSEW DESTA, INFORMED ME ON JULY 13 THAT HE HAS RECENTLY BEEN NAMED "CHIEF OF STAFF" FOR THE EDU AND WILL NOW BE WORKING OUT OF KHARTOUM. HE DESCRIBED THE SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA AS DETERIORATING AND THOUGHT THAT THE NEXT THREE MONTHS WILL BE "CRUCIAL" FOR THE MENGISTU REGIME, WHICH NOW FACES LOSS OF BOTH ERITREA AND OGADEN. DESTA ALSO SAID HE EXPECTS TO CONTACT THE EMBASSY IN KHARTOUM ONCE HE GETS ESTABLISHED THERE. END SUMMARY.

1. FORMER ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR TO YEMEN, COMMODORE TASSEW DESTA CAME TO CALL ON ME ON JULY 13 TO BRING ME UP TO DATE ON HIS ANTI-DIRG ACTIVITIES. HE STATED THAT HE HAS BEEN RECENTLY NAMED "CHIEF OF STAFF" FOR THE EDU WHOSE HEAD-QUARTERS WILL NOW BE PERMANENTLY ESTABLISHED IN KHARTOUM. DESTA, THEREFORE, PLANS TO GO TO KHARTOUM IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS WHERE HE WILL ASSUME HIS NEW DUTIES. HE STATED THAT HE INTENDS, HOWEVER, TO KEEP HIS HOUSE HERE IN SANA BECAUSE SANA IS A GOOD CONTACT POINT FOR PEOPLE GOING IN AND OUT
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OF ADDIS ABABA ON THE REGULAR WEEKLY ETHIOPIAN AIR FLIGHT. (HE WAS MOST APPRECIATIVE THAT YARG HAS PROVIDED HIM AND IS FAMILY WITH ACCOMHDATIONS AND LIVING EXPENSES.)

2. DESTA STATED THAT HE THOUGHT THE NEXT TWO OR THREE MONTHS WILL BE "CRUCIAL" ONES FOR ETHIOPIA AND FOR THE MENG-

ISTU REGIME. HE OPINED THAT IF MENGISTU CAN GET THROUGH THE RAINY SEASON, CHANCES ARE HIS REGIME WILL BE FURTHER ENTRENCHED AND, THEREFORE, MORE DIFFICULT TO OVERTHROW.

3. DESTA CONTINUED THAT IN THE MEANTIME THE SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA CONTINUES TO DETERIORATE AND IT APPEARS THAT ERITREA WILL "WIN ITS INDEPENDENCE IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE". HE ALSO THOUGHT THAT GREAT PARTS OF THE OGADEN ARE NOW IRRETRIEVABLY LOST TO ETHIOPIA. DESTA CONTINUED BY OPINING THAT MENGISTU MAY NOT BE TOO UNHAPPY WITH THESE DEVELOPMENTS BECAUSE HE CAN ALWAYS BLAME THE LOSS OF ERITREA AND THE OGADEN ON MISTAKES MADE BY THE HAILE SELASSIE REGIME AND THUS CONSOLIDATE EVEN FURTHER HIS CONTROL OVER WHAT WILL BE LEFT OF ETHIOPIA. DESTA COMMENTED THAT THE FACT THAT MENGISTU IS FOCUSING ON EDU AS HIS PRIMARY ENEMY WOULD TEND TO SHOW HE IS MORE INTEREST IN DEFEATING HIS IDEOLOGICAL ENEMIES RATHER THAN ETHIOPIA'S TRADITIONAL FOES.

4. DESTA WENT ON TO SAY THAT EDU HAS ALSO CONCLUDED THAT ERITREA IS ON THE VERGE OF OBTAINING ITS INDEPENDENCE. EDU, THEREFORE, IS TRYING TO ESTABLISH GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE ELF IN THE HOPE THAT IN THE FUTURE IF THE EDU COMES TO POWER ERITREA AND ETHIOPIA CAN WORK OUT A "BROTHERLY RELATIONSHIP" WHICH WOULD ENABLE ETHIOPIA TO CONTINUE TO USE THE RED SEA PORTS WHILE PERMITTING ERITREA TO IMPORT
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ITS FOOD FROM THE RICHER ETHIOPIAN PROVINCES TO THE SOUTH. HE WAS NOT SURE, HOWEVER, WHICH GROUP WOULD FINALLY EMERGE ON TOP IN ERITREA, THE MODERATE ELF OR THE LEFTIST EFLP; THE LATTER GROUP HE CHARACTERIZED AS MUCH SMALLER BUT BETTER ORGANIZED AND BETTER MOTIVATED.

5. DESTA ALSO INFORMED ME THAT HE WOULD BE CONTACTING THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN KHARTOUM ONCE HE GETS ESTABLISHED THERE.

6. COMMENT: DESTA IS A PRO-WESTERN, MODERATE ETHIOPIAN, WHO WILL DOUBTLESS PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN ETHIOPIA, IF THE EDU EVER COMES TO POWER. I THINK IT IS USEFUL FOR US TO CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN OUR LOW-KEY CONTACTS WITH HIM AND HOPE EMBASSY KHARTOUM WILL PICK HIM UP ONCE HE GETS IN TOUCH.

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
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Subject: ACTIVITIES OF FORMER ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR BEGIN SUMMARY: FORMER ETHIOPIAN AMBASSADOR, COMMODORE TASSEW DESTA, INFORMED ME ON JULY 13 THAT HE HAS R
TAGS: PINR, PGOV, PINS, ET, SU, EDU, ELF, (TASSEW DESTA)
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